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The Hand of the Lord upon the Cattle.

A

S E R M O N

Occasioned by the

D I S T E M P E R

AMONG THE

C A T T L E.

*Very proper to be read and considered by all
Persons, who have been, or may be Sufferers
thereby.*

Οὐρανὸς μὲν πρῶτον ἐνώχλει.

Hom.

By a MINISTER of the Church of England.

*The Rev^d Mr Powell, lately of Catharine-Hall
Cambridge*

L O N D O N:

Printed for S. AUSTEN, in Newgate-Street.

MDCCXLVII.

The Heart of the Lord

SERMON

DISTEMPER

CATTLE

For proper to be read and considered by all
Persons, who have been, or may be affected
thereto.

Original and revised text.

By a Minister of the Church of England.

LONDON:
Printed for J. A. [illegible]

Exodus, Chap. ix, the former Part of the 3d Verse, and latter Part of the 6th Verse.

Behold, the Hand of the Lord is upon thy Cattle. And all the Cattle of Egypt died. But of the Cattle of the Children of Israel died not one.

YOU will easily imagine that the fatal Distemper, which has long raged in these Kingdoms, as well as in other Parts of *Europe*, among the Cattle, and the Renewing the Orders of the Government, which have been so lately read to you, for Preventing as much as possible the Increase of it, has occasioned the Choice of these Words.

I shall therefore first endeavour to give you a brief Account of this Passage in Holy Scripture, before I proceed to shew, what Use I intend to make of it.

The Children of *Israel*, mentioned in the Text, were Descendants of *Abraham*, the *Friend of God*, to whom, he had promised to give the Land of *Canaan* for a Possession. But, before this Promise could be fulfilled, they were to suffer many Things ; to be afflicted, evil intreated, and inflaved for *four hundred Years*.

During this Time, it is to be feared, the greatest Part of them lived in a total Neglect of their Duty to the *True God*, and many of them were actually guilty of Worshipping *False Gods*. Some of them, though they were fretted and gauled with the Yoke of their *Egyptian* Bondage, were too obstinate to call upon God ; while others, by their base Com-

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pliances, hoped to please their Masters, and so make their Servitude easier.

Till at length, finding these Expedients vain and fruitless, they began to think upon the *God of their Fathers*; they cried by Reason of their Bondage, and their Cry came up unto God. Affliction is a bitter Potion, but if it cures us of our Sins, and inclines us to call upon God, it is a *wholsome* one. So these People found, for they no sooner applied to him, but he *heard their Groaning*: He remembered his Covenant; he looked upon the *Children of Israel*, with an Eye of Compassion; had a Respect unto them, and came down to deliver them out of the Hand of the Egyptians.

For this Purpose, he commissioned *Moses and Aaron* to be his Ambassadors, and sent them to *Pharaoh*, to demand Liberty for his People; with full Power to oblige him to it by Force, if he could not be brought to it by Persuasion.

Pharaoh was a Person of a haughty, imperious, obstinate Temper, and consequently not very likely to consent to part with so many Thousand useful Hands, at the first Demand. Accordingly, when *Moses and Aaron*, at their first Audience, desired him, in the Name of their Master, the King of Kings, and the Lord of Lords, to let the People go, he absolutely refused, and impiously set them, and their God at Defiance. *Who is the Lord, that I should obey his Voice, to let Israel go? Do your worst. I know not the Lord of whom you speak. I never heard so much as his Name before: I value him not. Neither will I let Israel go.*

Thus do wicked Men declare War against Heaven, because they know not the Power or the Justice of God. But, when he spreads abroad his Terrors, and his Judgments come thundering down upon their Heads, then they, that knew him not, shall fear and tremble before him, and be forced to

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to confess there is verily a God that judgeth the Earth.

This was the Case with *Pharaoh*. He knew not the Lord. But he shall be made to know him and to fear him too. He has declared War without sitting down to consider the Strength of his Enemy. He has drawn the Sword. Struck the first Stroke. Now let him look to himself. The Lord of Hosts, is mustering his Troops, and will bring such Armies into the Field as never were seen before or since. Against which, *Pharaoh* and all his Horsemen and his Chariots shall not be able to stand. It is in vain for the Stoutest and the Strongest, and the Greatest Sinners to think of standing in Defiance against the Judgments of God. For *Who can stand before his Indignation? Who can abide the Fierceness of his Anger?* *Moses* is therefore ordered to set the Battle in Array against him, to humble this haughty Prince, and teach him to know his Maker.

First of all therefore he lets him see, that Great as he was in being King of Egypt; and Proud as he was of his River Nile, yet that he could not command so much as a Drop of Water in his whole Kingdom without Leave from the God of Israel, whom he so much despised. Wherefore he only stretched out his Hand and all the Waters of Egypt were turned into Blood. This Plague continued seven Days, and *Pharaoh* continued obstinate.

However the next had a little more Effect; the Shoals of Frogs which filled his Palace, his Board, and his Bed made him begin to relent. It was no small Mortification to be disturbed in his own House; nay, to be turned out of it by such mean, despicable Creatures. This made him stoop to desire *Moses* would pray for him, and to promise him

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him the People should go. Though the Plague was no sooner removed, but he changed his Mind.

Wherefore *Moses* brings new Troops into the Field, and attacks him with numberless Swarms of *Lice* and of *Flies*. What could be more mortifying to a proud Man than to be tormented with such filthy Creatures, *Lice* crawling about him in spite of all his Washing, and Changing of Raiment; or with such importunate, stinking Creatures as *Flies*, buzzing about his Ears, and rushing into his Mouth with every thing that he eat or drank? Here again he seems to submit; owns himself unable to contend any longer; humbles himself before the God of *Israel*, and desires *Moses* would intreat the Lord for him: Let but these Swarms of *Flies* be removed and the *People shall go*. Accordingly the *Flies* departed, but *Pharaoh* remained obstinate; broke his Engagements, and would not let the People go.

Thus Sinners, when under the Convictions of Conscience, or the Fear of Punishment, will promise any Thing. They will engage to part with their beloved Sins, send them quite away, and never desire to see them any more.

No sooner are these Fears removed, but they forget all their Promises, return to their former Sins; and, like *Pharaoh*, will not let them go; and so harden themselves till some worse Evil come upon them.

This was the Case with *Pharaoh*. Since he had perfidiously broke his Word, which ought to be sacred, especially with Kings, *Moses* tells him God would plague him *more and more*.

Accordingly we read in the next Chapter, God sent a Pestilential Distemper among the Cattle, so that all the Cattle of Egypt died. That is, the greatest Part of them perished; but of the Cattle of the Children of *Israel* died not one.

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There is no Doubt but the same Distinction had been observed through all the foregoing Plagues, as well as in this, though it is not expressly mentioned before the Plague of Flies; when the Lord said, *I will put a Division between my People and thy People.*

Either *Pharaoh* had not been curious enough to enquire, how it fared with the *Israelites* when the *Waters* were turned into *Blood*, and the *Frogs* and *Lice* infested them. Or his Servants were afraid to tell him of it; and therefore *Moses* is ordered to let him know that God would make this manifest Distinction, that so extraordinary an Instance of Divine Providence might not be overlooked, and that *Pharaoh* might not lose so convincing a *Proof* that this was the *Finger of God.*

And therefore, when God is about to send this grievous Murrain among the Cattle, *Pharaoh* is expressly told, that the *Lord shall sever between the Cattle of Israel and the Cattle of Egypt.* Though they all shall be grazing together in one Pasture, though they should drink the same Water, and eat the same Fodder; yet *one should be taken and the other left*; and there *shall nothing die of all that is the Childrens of Israel.* *Pharaoh* was resolved to be satisfied of the Truth upon this Occasion. Wherefore he sent and found it to be literally so; that his own People had lost almost all their Cattle, but, as it is in the Words of the Text, *of the Cattle of the Children of Israel died not one.*

Having thus given you an Account of the Words, I proceed now to shew what Use I would make of them. First of all, we should learn from hence, that, when such fatal Distempers come among Cattle, they are of God's sending. *The Hand of the Lord is upon them.*

There have been great Disputes among Philosophers concerning the true Cause and Origin of Pestilential

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Pestilential Distempers. And it is generally agreed that it proceeds from noxious Vapours, and poisonous Exhalations, which infect the Air, filling it with malignant Particles, and rendering it morbid and unwholesome. And hence they account for different Beasts being affected, or not, with it, according to their several Natures and different Sorts of Nourishment; as well as how the Cattle come to be affected with it at all, and very often when human Creatures are not. As is, *blessed be God,* the Case in the present Distemper which rages among us. The *Beasts of the Field* only suffer by it, while the *Beasts of the People* remain in the Midst of it unhurt and untouched.

This is said to be owing to the Quickness of Scent in many Brute Animals; and to the Manner of their Feeding. From the Quickness of their Scent the Nerves may be more powerfully affected by the infectious Quality. And, by their Feeding with their Heads close to the Ground, they may be supposed to suck in the noxious Effluvia fresh and strong from the Earth before it can receive any Assistance from the external Air to cleanse and purify it. What helps to make this the more probable is, that there are poisonous Steams known which are fatal only within a certain Distance of the Surface, but never rise higher. And it is certain there are some Minerals which abound with such poisonous Parts as make them fatal to the Persons that dig them out of the Mines; many of whom are sometimes killed upon the Spot by the deadly Vapours that arise from them; and they, whose Business it is to work upon them afterwards, are never healthy. All which is very true, but still there are Difficulties, which this Hypothesis will not explain.

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As first of all, how the whole Atmosphere (*i. e.* the whole Body of the Air) of a Country comes to be so infectious and mortal; especially where the Minerals, which produce the pestilential Effluvia, do not abound. And even where they do abound, it must be considered that they are so wrapped up in the Bowels of the Mountains, and imprisoned in the Depths of the Earth, that it is not to be supposed any great Quantities of their Effluvia can escape, sufficient to infect such vast Tracts of Air at once.

Another Difficulty is, that if the Reason why the *Beasts* are sometimes infected, when *Men* are not, is the Quickness of their Scent, the Manner of their Feeding, and the Nature of their Food: It should follow, that those Creatures, which have the quickest Smell, should be first infected, which is not the Case. And especially, that all those Creatures, which take their Food in the same manner, graze in the same common Pasture, and live upon the same sort of Nourishment, should all be equally infected; and yet we find this has not been the Case. The Distemper, which is now in this Nation, and has been for near three Years, has only affected the *horned Kind*; Horses, Sheep, and Deer, which eat the *same Grass*, or *Hay*, drink the *same Water*, breathe the *same Air*, were never healthier. We read of Plagues that have attacked Men only, and not Women; nay, that have attacked the Natives of a particular Country only, while Strangers and Foreigners have lived and conversed with the Sick, without any Danger. Some Plagues are confined to *particular Countries*; others to a *particular Spot*, or Part of a Country, and have spread no further. Thus it happened in this Nation about fourscore Years ago, when the Plague was confined to the City of *London* only, where it destroyed about 100,000 Souls, but went no further. On the

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other Hand, some have been *universal*, spreading their Lines of Destruction over the whole Earth. Such a one happened in the Reign of *Justinian* the Emperor, which was neither restrained to one Part of the World, nor confined to this or that particular Season of the Year, but seized on all Men alike, of different Climates, Diet, and Complexions; extending its infectious Wings to the utmost Bounds of the Earth; visiting all Places with equal Fury where Mankind inhabited, sparing neither Islands, Caves, or Mountains; and continued for fifty Years together in one Corner of the World or other, so that the greatest Part of Mankind in that Age might be said to be destroyed by it.

These are Things which the natural Philosopher will find it impossible to account for; he must either acknowledge his own Ignorance, or confess, like *Pharaoh's* Magicians, *This is the Finger of God.*

Which is the Point insisted upon, *viz.* That when such fatal Distempers come, tho' it be only among the Cattle, they are of God's sending. *Behold the Hand of the Lord is upon thy Cattle, Ex. ix. 3.*

There is no doubt but his Providence extends itself to all his Creatures universally, from the *Leviathan*, that takes his Pastime in the great Deep, unto the *Moth* that wantons in the Sun-beams; *These all wait upon him, and he giveth them their Meat in due Season, Ps. civ. All the Beasts of the Earth are his, and so are the Cattle upon a thousand Hills.* For these he causes the *Grass* to grow, and the green Herb to spring forth. These are all under his Inspection, like a Flock under the Eye of the Shepherd: He that made them has an absolute Dominion over them, and the sole Property in them. These are all mine, the *Beasts of the Forest*, and the *Beasts of the Field*; the *Cattle of the Hills*, and the *Fowls of the Mountains.* They were all

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all created by my Power, subsist by my Care, and dwell under my Protection: So that nothing can befall them, but what is *observed*; nothing can happen, but what is *permitted* by me. Even the least and the most inconsiderable Part of the Creation is under the Protection of the Divine Providence; so that not a *Sparrow* can fall on the Ground without your heavenly Father. Now there it may be properly asked, Doth God take Care for *Sparrows*? And doth he not take Care for *Oxen* also? Yes, without doubt he doth. The *Beasts of the Field* are more especially appointed for the Service of *Man*, and seem to have, for that Reason, a more particular Care taken of them; forasmuch as God has made the *Grass* to grow for them, that they might not be distressed, like the *Beasts of the Forest* for Food; but find it every where, with but little Expence or Trouble to the Owner, being at once most *useful* and less *burthensome*.

We must conclude therefore, that, when any grievous Misfortune befalls these useful Creatures, it is the *Hand of the Lord upon them*. When they are swept away by any Contagion, and die of Distempers that no Man can cure, we must say with the Psalmist, *The Lord hideth his Face from them, and they are troubled; it is he that taketh away their Breath, and they die.*

Let us then learn from hence to have awful and adoring Thoughts of the infinite *Wisdom* and *Providence* of God; and be very careful how we offend him, who is able to punish us so many different Ways, to deprive us of all our Comforts, turn even our *Blessings* into *Curses*, and make those Creatures a *Scourge*, which were intended for our *Service*. We should also learn hence to adore the infinite *Goodness* of the Divine Being, that in the midst of Justice remembers Mercy, and suffers not the *whole Species* to be swept away by such incurable

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ble Diseases. For, when these poisoned Arrows fly abroad, there is no Reason to be assigned why they should miss any thing that stands in their way; or that the Infection should ever stop, till like a Fire it has consumed all. Every Beast that is infected helps to spread the Contagion; and consequently, the more the Distemper spreads, the more Strength it should gather, until it becomes universal, and irresistible. It is therefore the *Goodness* of God that sets Bounds to the Rage of this Mortality; and it is of his *Mercy* that *all* are not destroyed. To him therefore be the Glory, to him be the Praise: *yea, let Beasts and Cattle praise the Name of the Lord, for his Name alone is excellent, and his Glory above Earth and Heaven.*

Secondly, Another Use to be made of these Words is, that from them we may learn, that God does sometimes make a *visible* Separation between his *Friends* and his *Enemies*, for *of the Cattle of the Children of Israel died not one.*

What Solomon says is no doubt generally true: *All Things come alike to all, there is one Event to the Righteous and to the Wicked: As is the Good, so is the Sinner; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth an Oath,* Eccles. ix. 2.

They are equally Partakers of the common Judgments, or the common Mercies of God. He *maketh his Sun to shine upon the Evil, and upon the Good; and sendeth Rain on the Just, and on the Unjust,* Mat. v. 45. The Sword devours one as well as another; a loyal *Uriah*, and a rebellious *Abso- lom*; a wicked *Abab*, and a holy *Josiah*.

The Land of *Canaan* has its Famines, as well as the Land of *Egypt*. And in all such *general Calamities* the People of God must expect to have their Share as well as others. Is the hospitable *Abram* rich, so is the churlish *Nabal*? Is *Isaac*, the Son of the Promise, reduced to want *Bread* for himself and

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and his Family? *Abimelech*, the Son of a *Philistine*, abounds with it. So that, as the wise Man says, *No Man knoweth Love or Hatred by all that is before him.* As much as to say, We are not to make any Judgment of God's Favour or Displeasure; of the real Happiness or Misery of Men from these Events, or from their outward State and Condition. But rather consider them as the unavoidable Consequences of our Situation in *this Life*, wherein we are to be exercised and disciplined for a *better*.

Every one's own Observation is sufficient to prove, that this is as much the common Course of Things *now*, as it was in the Days of *Solomon*. But still it must be allowed, that God does *sometimes* make a *visible* Separation between his *Friends* and his *Enemies*,

Which may be demonstrated, first of all, from the Testimony of *Solomon* himself and other holy Writers.

Secondly, By many undoubted Instances of the Divine Providence making such a Separation. And,

Thirdly, From the Nature and Reason of the Thing itself.

First then, In the Chapter immediately foregoing that in which *Solomon* says there is one *Event* to all, viz. *Eccles. viii. 12*, he has this remarkable Passage:

Tho' a Sinner do Evil an hundred Times, and his Days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God. But it shall not be well with the Wicked; neither shall he prolong his Days, which are as a Shadow, because he feareth not before God. Here you see is a manifest Separation between the Good and Bad. Another of the same Kind we have, *Is. iii. 10.* Say ye to the Righteous it shall be well with him, for they shall eat the Fruit of their Doings. Wo unto the Wicked, for it shall

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shall be ill with him, for the Reward of his Hands shall be given him. In this Chapter, the Prophet is foretelling the Publick Calamities which should befall his own People, together with their final Destruction. And yet, by God's Direction, assures good People, that, even in the universal Ruin of the Nation, they should be delivered; and a particular Providence employed to take Care of them. *The Meek of the Earth*, according to the Words of *Zephaniah ii. 3*, may hope to be preserved in the Day of the Lord's Anger. Whatever happens to others, they shall be safe. The Judge of all the Earth will not slay the Righteous with the Wicked.

This Doctrine is not only confirmed by the Testimony of several holy Writers, but also by many undoubted Instances of the Divine Providence making a visible Separation between his Friends and his Enemies.

The first remarkable Instance of this Kind, which I shall mention, is the Deliverance of *Lot* out of *Sodom*.

If there had been *ten* such righteous Persons in it, they might have saved the City; but, as there was not one besides himself, he could only save his own Family from the total Destruction, which came upon all the Cities of the Plain; and so he stands a remarkable Example of the Providential Care God takes of his Servants. The same Divine Care accompanied *Abraham* in all his Travels; protected *David* in all his Wars; preserved *Daniel* in the Lion's Den; saved the three Jews from the Fiery Furnace; raised *Joseph* to be Governor over all the Land of Egypt; provided *Jonah* his Fish and his Gourd; called *Paul* to the Ministry, saving him from that blind Zeal of persecuting the Saints, and delivered *Peter* out of Prison, when he was sleeping between two Soldiers. Our blessed Lord,
speaking

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speaking of the Destruction of *Jerusalem* by the *Romans*, particularly mentions the extraordinary Instances of Divine Providence, which should be visible at that Time, in *Rescuing* some Persons in the same Place, Condition, Circumstances, and Employment, from that Calamity, in which others were left to perish. *Two shall be in the Field, one shall be taken, and the other left. Two shall be grinding in the same Mill, or lying in the same Bed, one shall be taken, and the other left.* All which, we are assured, was literally fulfilled, when *Jerusalem* was taken, in the remarkable Preservation of all the Christians among them from that great Calamity, in which so many Hundred Thousand *Jews* perished.

Nothing, indeed, can be stronger to this Purpose than the Distinction made between the *Egyptians* and the *Hebrews*; first of all, in the Case of the *Flies*, when they swarmed in all the rest of the *Land of Egypt*, there was not one more than ordinary in the *Land of Goshen*. Nay, though they filled the House of an *Egyptian*, yet, if his next Door Neighbour was an *Israelite*, there was not one to be found.

So likewise, when the Horses, and Asses, and Camels, and Oxen of the *Egyptians* died in such Numbers, *Nothing died of all that was the Childrens of Israel.* When the *Hail* made so dreadful Havock, killing Man and Beast, throughout the *Land of Egypt*; where the *Children of Israel* were, there was no *Hail*. When God commanded the *Land of Egypt* to be invaded by numberless Legions of Locusts, not so much as one Straggler from this great Army was to be found in *Goshen*.

But what seems still to be more remarkable, is the keeping up this Distinction, between the *Israelites* and the *Egyptians*, in the Plague of *Darkness*. It appears plainly, that, though the greatest
Number

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Number of the *Israelites* dwelt in *Goshen*, yet some of them lived in the *City* with the *Egyptians*. Their Houses were contiguous, and intermixed one with another; and yet, when it was *thick Darknefs* in one House, it was *broad Day-Light* in the next: And while the *Egyptians* were bound in Chains of *Darknefs*, for three Days and Nights, all the Children of *Israel* had *Light* in their Dwellings. If it had pleased God to have stricken the *Egyptians*, as he did the *Sodomites*, with *Blindness*, and left the *Israelites* the Use of their Eyes, it would not have appeared so extraordinary. But these strong and surprizing Mixtures of the two Extrems of *Night* and *Day*, *Light* and *Shade*, could only be made by him, who created *both*, and first divided the *Darknefs* from the *Light*.

Lastly, when the *Destroying Angel* was sent forth with a Commission to slay all the *First-born* of the *Egyptians*, he was absolutely forbid to touch the Son of an *Israelite*; and, lest there should be any Mistake, their Doors were all marked with the *Blood of Sprinkling*, which was a sufficient Protection for all that lived in that House, and an absolute Prohibition to the Angel of Death, saying, Pass on, stop not here, enter not at this Door, for thou hast no Power over them that are under God's Protection.

Thirdly, It is very agreeable to *Reason*, that God should sometimes make these remarkable Distinctions between his *Friends* and his *Enemies*.

First, Because, without that, there would be no *End* to Destruction, till it became total. When once *Famine*, or *Pestilence*, begin to make Head, as *Fire* among dry *Stubble*, the further it spreads the stronger it grows; so there would be no resisting them. If the *Providence* of God did not interpose, they would draw their *Lines* of *Confusion* from

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from one End of the Earth to the other, and sweep all before them.

Secondly, If God was never to make such Distinctions in this World, it would look as if he had no Share or Concern in the *Government* of it; Wicked Men would thereby be much encouraged in their Atheistical Notions; and would be ready not only to say in their Hearts, *There is no God*; but to proclaim their Infidelity with their *Mouths*. They would insult the good Man in his Calamity, as they did *David*, saying, *Where is now thy God? If there is a God of all Power*, Why does he not help his *Friends*? *If there is Knowledge in the most High*, their Afflictions cannot be hid from him. Is it consistent with his Goodness to let *them* go and weep, while his *Enemies* rejoice? *Tush*, there is no Knowledge in the most High, or he taketh no Cognizance of what is done upon Earth, and has no Concern about *Good* or *Bad*; meddles not with *Human Affairs*, but leaves every one to shift for himself, and do *what is right in his own Eyes*.

It is therefore necessary to stop the Mouths of *Profane Men*, that *Good Men* should be sometimes distinguished by extraordinary Providences.

Nor yet ought this Distinction to be *constantly* and *exactly* observed in *all* the Affairs of *this Life*; because it would look as if we were to expect nothing *after it*. This World would be no longer deemed, what it really is, a State of *Probation*, but a State of *Retribution*.

One great Argument for a future State would be entirely destroyed.

In short, though a Distinction be *sometimes* proper, yet a *constant* and *regular Distinction* would destroy its *own Ends*, and be a Means, rather of weakening, than establishing the Evidences of the Being and Providence of God. Because such

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an uniform Proceeding would look more like the Effect of *Fate* and *Necessity*, than of *Wisdom* and *Choice*. And consequently the Idea of a Supreme Being would be stripped of its most glorious Attributes of *Wisdom*, *Knowledge*, *Goodness*, *Justice*, and *Power*; which would be worse than *Atheism* itself.

Let all Good People therefore learn from hence, in any Tryals and Troubles whatsoever, to rest in this Great Truth, that there is a *God who will judge the World in Righteousness*.

Secondly, Let all those, who sincerely endeavour to recommend themselves by *Faith* and *Obedience* to the Divine Protection, depend upon having it in some Shape or other. For whoever trusted in him and was deceived?

The *Good Man* may be inclined to think when the Storm rages, and the Waves of Affliction run high, that he is either *forsaken* or *forgotten* of God. But let him be assured that *God knows them that are his*, and that all Things work together for Good unto them. And, though God may not think proper to distinguish him by any remarkable Act of Providence, yet he is in no Danger of being hid or forgotten. If there is but one of them in a City, nay if there is but one in a Kingdom, God knows him, and will not overlook him. But will set him apart, if he sees that to be best for him, will give his Angels charge over him, to deliver him from the Pestilence that walketh in Darknes, and from the Arrow that flieth by Day. He will preserve him in the Day of Battle, so that, though Death cut off Thousands on his *Right-Hand* and on his *Left*, yet it shall not come nigh him. In a Famine the Ravens shall feed him; and in the Days of Dearth he shall have enough. So that he may say with the holy Confidence of the Prophet *Habakkuk*: *Al-*
though

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though the Fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall Fruit be in the Vines. Though the Labour of the Olive shall fail, and the Fields yield no Meat. Tho' the Flock shall be cut off from the Fold, and there shall be no Herd in the Stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my Salvation. For the Confidence of the Righteous shall not utterly fail; and, although God may not see it proper to deliver him visibly in this Life, yet, In the last Place; know assuredly, that there shall come a Day, when the Servants of the Lord shall be distinguished from the rest of Mankind in a most eminent Manner. When there shall be an unerring Judgment passed upon all Men; and an eternal Separation made be between the Enemies and the Friends of God. For the Lord knoweth how to deliver the Godly out of Temptations; and to reserve the Unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished. So that when it happens, as it sometimes does, that the Just and Unjust perish together in a general Calamity, it is a Mercy to the one and a Punishment to the other. The Good are often snatched away from the Evil to come; when the Wicked are preserved for the Day of the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.

Thirdly, another Use which I would make of the Words of my Text is to put you in mind, that, as the Creatures were given for the Benefit of Man, when any Misfortune happens to them, we must look for the Cause of it in ourselves.

When God first made Man, he invested him with Power and Dominion over all the rest of the Creation; making all the Beasts of the Field, Fowl of the Air, and the Fish of the Sea, subservient to his Pleasure, Profit, or Necessities. The Almighty himself gave him his Commission in these extensive Terms: *Have thou Dominion over the Fish*

of the Sea, and over the Fowl of the Air, and over every living Thing that creepeth upon the Earth. God, who is the Great Lord and Proprietor of all, might dispose of his own Creatures as he pleased. And he has been pleased to bestow them upon the Children of Men. So that there is no disputing the Justness of their Title. And that it might not be a *bare Title*, an empty Name of Dominion, but a real and a *beneficial* Grant, he has put the *Fear and the Dread of Man upon every Beast of the Earth, and upon every Fowl of the Air, and upon all the Fishes of the Sea, and into his Hand are they delivered.* From this Dread it is, that those Beasts, which would be most hurtful to Man, and stand least in need of his Assistance, avoid him as much as possible; concealing themselves from him in Caves and Dens, choosing to dwell in Woods and Deserts, and such Places as are least frequented by human Kind. Nay, there are none of the Beasts of the Forests so *savage*, or the Fowls of the Air so *wild*, but have been *tamed* by Man; nor any Monster of the Deep, but what, he has made subservient to his Use, if found at all fit for it. Nay, even Serpents so famed for their Cunning must own that Man is still wiser than them; can draw them into Snares; strip them of their Poison, and make them harmless and familiar. *For every Kind of Beasts and of Birds (says St. James) and of Serpents, and of Things in the Sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of Mankind, iii. 7.*

Then as to those Creatures, which are more necessary to Man either for Food, or Profit, or Pleasure; how *easily* are they managed and governed, notwithstanding their great Strength? *Behold we put Bits in the Horses Mouths, and a Yoke upon the Neck of the Ox; and they obey us. The Sheep patiently submit to the Shearer, that they*

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they may *cloath* their great Master; and their Lambs go quickly to the Slaughter, that they may *feed* him. In short, the Comfort of Man's Life depends upon these Creatures. It is from the *Beasts* of the *Plough* and of the *Pail* that we must have our *Food* and our *Raiment*. *Therewith* indeed we are taught to be *content*, but how should we be content *without* either? If it were not for the *Beasts* of the *Pail*, we should want the chief Part of our *Food*. And, if it were not for the *Fleece* of the *Flocks*, we should want *Cloathing*. Now consider what a miserable Creature must *Man* be without *Bread*, or *Meat*, or *Cloaths*. Which is sufficient to shew how necessary these Creatures are to our Comfort, and what a Blessing it is that God has made them subject to us, and *delivered them into our Hand*.

Now since there is so near a Connection between *Man* and *Beast*, *Master* and *Servant*, that the *Happiness* of one is necessarily connected, as one may say, with the *Welfare* of the other: Whatever Evil happens to *them*, must be understood to be an Evil to their *Master* and not to *themselves*. For we may in this Case apply *David's* Words literally, when the *Rot* sweeps away our *Flocks*, What *have these Sheep done*? Or when the *Murrain* destroys our Herds, These *Cattle, Lord, what have they done*? They are harmless and innocent, not capable of Good or Evil, and, consequently, cannot become Objects of the Divine Displeasure. No, they are only the Instruments through which, he punishes their *offending Masters*. Therefore, however Men may think to account for the *Cause* of those Evils among their *Cattle*, from Unkindness of the Season, unforeseen Accident, or any other natural Causes, they may be sure the *final Cause* is in *themselves*. Sin is its own Punishment, as it
is

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is the Original of all the *Evils* that are in the World. Whatever the *Calamity* be, we may be certain *Sin* was the Occasion of it. If a *Man* suffers, it is for his *own Sin*. If *Beasts* suffer, it is for the *Sins of Men*. General Calamities are publick Rebukes for *national* Wickedness; as particular ones are *Checks* and *Corrections* for *private* Offences. The poor Widow of *Sarepta* knew very well that the Famine was sent to punish the *whole People* for their *Sins*; but, when her *Son* died, she looked upon that as a private Affliction laid upon her for her *own Sins*: *Art thou come*, says she to the Prophet, *to call my Sin to remembrance, and to slay my Son?* In that dreadful Desolation, which is described by the Prophet *Joel*, which, he says, was intended to bring all Sorts of People to a Sense of their *Sins*; he particularly mentions the Death of the *Cattle*. This he thought had something so awakening in it as must affect the *Generality* of People, and especially the *Husbandmen*, whom he expressly calls upon: *Be ashamed O ye Husbandmen and howl. Is not the Meat cut off before your Eyes? How do the Beasts groan? the Herds of the Cattle are perplexed.*

So also the Prophet *Zechary*, in describing the heavy Judgments of God against the Enemies of his Church, takes particular Notice that the Plague should infect their *Cattle*: *So shall be the Plague of the Horse, of the Mule, of the Camel, and of the Ass, and of all the Beasts that shall be in these Tents, as this Plague*, Ch. xiv. 15.

From all which, it appears, that it is plainly God's Intent by these Judgments to awaken *Men* to a Sense of *Guilt*; to put them upon enquiring what they have *done* to provoke his Anger; and to call to remembrance their *past Sins*, that they may be blotted out by a true Repentance.

It

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It was an Instance of God's infinite Mercy to Sinners under the Law, that they were permitted to make an Attonement for Sin by *Burnt-Offerings and Sacrifices*, wherein the Life of the *Beast* was accepted for the Life of the *Sinner*. So also now, when God sends a Plague among the *Cattle*, it must be looked upon as a Token of his Mercy to *Men*; and a kind Providence, whereby he intends to awaken them to Repentance, lest, if they continue in their Sins, the *same*, or *some worse Evil* come upon *them*. If the *Egyptians* could have taken Warning when their *Corn* was cut off, and their *Cattle* destroyed, it would have saved the Lives of their *Children*. But, since they did not, God sent a Plague which swept away all the First-born in *Egypt* in one Night, so that there was not an *House* where there was not one dead.

The *Sin* is very often to be discovered and pointed out by the *Punishment*. Thus, though God designed the Blessing for *Jacob*, yet he perhaps was too well pleased with and ascribed it to his own *Fraud* in obtaining it: This seems both *punished* and *pointed* out by the *fraudulent* Dealings of his Father-in-Law. When therefore the Animals, which are so useful and necessary to Men, are destroyed; when Mens Creature Comforts are imbittered to them, or taken from them, if they will sincerely examine, I dare say, they will often discover sufficient Reason for it in the *Abuse* of those very Comforts, and consequently be convinced that the *Cause* of it is in *themselves*. Let them diligently search their own Hearts, and it will appear that either they have been *Proud* of their Treasures, as *Hezekiah* was. Or *Cruel* to their Beasts and unmerciful in using them. Or else have placed their *Trust* in these earthly Goods, like the Man in the Parable, who said to his Soul,
Take

Take thine Ease, thou hast Goods laid up for many Years. Or they have been *intemperate* in the Enjoyment of these things, *abusing* them, as *Nabal* did, to Riot and Drunkenness. Or they have been *unthankful* for their Plenty, as the *Israelites* were for their Manna, who, the more they were favoured, the more they sinned. Or, last of all, God may be pleased by this Means to improve their *Patience*, not duly exercised; or to try their *Faith*, not thoroughly proved; or to wean their *Affections*, too strongly attached to transitory Things. So that still, as I said before, the *final Cause* of all these extraordinary Providences will be found to be some Fault or Defect in ourselves.

Fourthly, Since this is the Case, we should look upon the *present Fatality* raging in some Parts of this Kingdom among the *Cattle*, as a *Punishment* for Sin, and a *Warning* to Repentance. Consider, it is the Voice of God speaking to *us* by the Mouth of these *Creatures*, as he did to *Balaam* by the Mouth of his *Ass*. And, if we will not hear, the Angel of God will draw his Sword against *us*, and save the *Beasts* alive. In the Groans of every *dying Beast* God may be said to cry aloud to all to consider what is amiss, that they may amend it; to enquire seriously what we have done to offend him, that we may know the Cause why he contendeth with us. When the Land mourns, and the Beasts are consumed, the Prophet *Jeremy*, xii. 4, tells us, it is for the Sins of the People. And the more we consider the Sins of the People, the more we shall be convinced of the Necessity that the Land should mourn. O! that all Orders and Degrees of People would learn from hence to humble themselves before the correcting Hand of God. To consider this Plague, as his Voice crying unto the City and unto the Country. That they would consider it as
 • a kind

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a kind *Warning*, a gentle *Method*, thus to lay the Sins of the *People* upon the Head of the *Beast*. And that, if they will take the *Warning*, and hear the *Voice*, and see the Shaking of the *Rod* in this lesser Punishment, it will be a Means of preventing greater Judgments.

You have heard that these things do not come by Chance; neither can they be entirely accounted for by second Causes; but must ultimately be attributed to the *Finger of God* himself; an awakening Providence sent to alarm a sinful Generation. We may be assured, that the *Lord is merciful and long-suffering to us-ward, and not willing that any should perish, but that they should come to Repentance*. And therefore it is, that he takes this Method to warn before he strikes; and to give Notice, as it were, before his Judgments come abroad, that all who believe may tremble and fear, and provide for themselves by true Repentance, so shall they avoid the *Wrath to come*.

We must acknowledge our *Provocations* have been very great, but that the *Patience* of God has been much greater. How many different Methods has he been pleased to make use of, to amend this sinful People? He has visited us with *Cold* and *Hunger*, with *Storm* and *Tempest*, with *Signs* in *Heaven*, and *Signs upon the Earth*, *War* abroad, and *Rebellion* at home; with *Sedition* and *privy Conspiracy*; and, at this Time, with a grievous *Pestilence* among the *Cattle*.

To what Purpose is all this, think you? but to rouse us out of our Carelessness, that we may see our Danger, and call upon our God. Has it had this Effect? Has it awakened any? Has it reclaimed any? Are we not as proud, intemperate, debauched, luxurious, false, wanton, and careless as ever? Does not Lying, and Cheating, and
D Slandering,

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Slandering, and Idleness, and Gaming, and Drinking, and Swearing, and Cursing, and false Witnessing, and Sabbath-breaking still greatly abound? 'Tis to be feared there are *few* who have been wrought upon hereby to consider what they have *done to offend God*, and much fewer, who consider what they *should do to please him*. Every Man thinks he has a *Right* to follow his *own* Humours and Fancies, without any Regard to *publick* Decency, Order or Institutions; and is content with a negative Character, thinking it enough for him, that he does *no Harm*. But alas! if, after we have done *all the Good* that we can, we must look upon ourselves as *unprofitable Servants*; what must become of them that *do none at all*?

Now if this be the Case, after so many awakening Providences, what must we suppose will be the Consequence? Why, either that God will remove the *Plague* from the *Beasts of the Field*, and lay it upon the *Beasts of the People*. Or we shall be given up into our *Enemies* Hands. Or, which is the *worst* of Evils, God will *forsake* us; he will no longer look upon us as *Friends*; he will no more *separate* between us and our *Enemies*; but leave us to follow our own Inventions, and permit us to run blindly and precipitately into our *own Destruction*. This is of all Evils the greatest, the forest *Plague*, the heaviest *Curse* that can befall a Nation, This was the utter Ruin of God's own People. When their Obstinacy proved too strong to be reclaimed, he then left them to themselves, saying, *Why should they be stricken any more? They will revolt more and more. My People would not hear my Voice, and Israel would not obey me. So I gave them up unto their own Hearts Lusts, and let them follow their own Imaginations*, Ps. lxxxix. 12, 13.

Lastly, Let not us of this County value ourselves, as if we were any whit better than our Neighbours, because

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because this Distemper has not yet reached *us*: But rather endeavour to improve this particular Providence, and learn from thence to fear, repent, and be thankful.

It is true, we have been, hitherto, intirely free from this great Contagion; but God only knows how long we shall continue so. It has been a great while in our Borders, but, by the Blessing of God upon the prudent Methods which have been used, it has been hitherto prevented from getting any Footing in this County, which should make us hope that God is still with us of a Truth: And believe, that he has been pleased to make this kind Separation between us and our Neighbours, to this End, that, whilst he is treating *them* with *Severity*, he might win *us* with *Gentleness*, and draw *us* with the *Cords of Affection*.

If this is the Case, how great must be our Stupidity and Ingratitude, if we do not observe the *Goodness of God*, and make him all possible Returns of *Duty, Love, and Obedience*? Let the Sufferings of *other Men* teach *us* to fear *his Judgments*, and the Consideration of *our own Unworthiness* make us tremble for *ourselves*. If we *for-sake* our Sins, we may still depend upon the *Divine Protection*; but, if we *continue* in them, we renounce all *Pretences* to it, and expose ourselves to the severest Effects of the *Divine Wrath*. If, when *this heavy Judgment* threatens us, we do not take Warning, we must be more hardened than the *Egyptians* themselves. For when *Moses* threatened them with the Plague of *Hail*, Those that feared the Word of the Lord among the Servants of *Pharaoh*, made their Cattle and Servants flee into their Houses. And shall there be found any among the Servants of *Pharaoh*, that fear the Word of the Lord; and none among the Servants of *Jesus Christ*? God forbid.

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Consider this, lest ye be found among those that *harden their Hearts*, and regard not the *Word of the Lord*. Take Heed that you despise not the *Long-suffering and Patience of God*, which is designed to bring you to *Repentance*.

If we desire the *Continuance* of our present Safety ; if we hope this *particular* Providence will still watch over us ; if we would be thought and used, as *Friends of God*, we must endeavour to imitate the *Faith and Obedience* of him, who is honoured with the Title of *God's Friend* in Holy Scripture. Which *Faith and Obedience* will not only *qualify* us for the *Divine Favour*, but likewise *prepare* us to bear with *Patience* whatsoever the *Divine Wisdom* may think fit to lay upon us. If he is pleased to visit us, or our *Cattle*, with a sore Disease ; if he deprive us of *all* our worldly Goods ; nay, if he requires us, as he did *Abraham*, to offer up, to part with an *only Son*, a favourite Child, that is *dear* to us as our *own Soul* ; if we imitate the *Faith and Obedience* of *Abraham*, we shall find ourselves surprisingly supported, and inwardly persuaded, that these Trials and Visitations are for the best. *The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away, Blessed be the Name of the Lord.*

If any of you have been visited by *Sickness*, or *Losses*, or have been deprived of any of your *Creature Comforts*, let it teach you to look home, and consider the *Cause* of it in *yourselves*. People are too apt in such Cases to be angry in the wrong Place, and rather chuse to lay the Blame upon any one else, than, where it ought to be, upon themselves. Let but a Man do, as he should do, consider how the *Reckoning* stands between *God* and his *own Soul* ; compute how *many Favours* he has received, and how *little Returns* he has made ; and
he

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he must confess his great Ingratitude, and acknowledge his Punishment is less than his Sins have deserved.

If God does not afflict *all Sinners* alike; if Good and Bad are *equal* Sharers in the *common* Benefits, or the *common* Judgments of God. It is not because he respects the *outward Persons* of Men, or neglects their *inward* and *moral Character*, but because *this* is not a State of *Rewards and Punishments*. He now suffers the *Wheat* and *Tares* to grow together, but, when the *Harvest* shall come, he will *separate* the *one* from the *other*, and *then the Tares shall be cast into an unquenchable Fire*.

Let none, therefore, be too confident in the Stability of their present Condition, *No one knows what a Day may bring forth*. It is our Duty to consider, that, though we are *now* exempt from this *Distemper*, yet we cannot assure ourselves, that this Exemption shall *continue*. It is so much the more our Duty to make *God* our *Friend*, whose Providence extends to all Occurrences; and particularly to be very *thankful* for the *present* Deliverance. This is the *least* Return we can make, the *least* we can do is to say, *God's Name be praised*.

Lastly, Let every one look upon *this* as a *Call* to *Repentance* for their own *particular* Sins, as well as for the *general* Sins of the Nation. Now, it is not likely Men should *repent*, till they are *convinced* they have done amiss. And it is impossible for them to be *convinced*, or to know wherein they have done amiss, unless they will take the Trouble to *examine* themselves; to search their own Hearts; and to trace their Actions back to the Fountain from whence they flow, even their *first Motives* and *Principles*. By this Means, they will be able to discover the corrupt Spring, which taints and marrs the best of their Doings. There they

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they will be apt to find out what the *particular Sin* was, that occasioned such a *particular Visitation*.

If a Man is deprived of his Substance, and *reduced* in the World; upon Examination, he will probably find, that he was too much *exalted* with his Abundance; it made him *Proud* and *Quarrelsome*; *Insolent* and *Oppressive*. When Riches are so abused, it is no Wonder they *make themselves Wings, and fly away*.

If a Man's *Crop* should be cut off by *Blasting*, or *Mildew*, or any other Means, let him consider, whether he has not often *murmured* at Plenty, or *abused* it by his Excesses, when Corn was *cheap*; or unreasonably *with-held* it, when it was *dear*. When his Barns have been full, let him consider, whether he has looked up unto *God*, with a *thankful Heart*, or rather ascribed his Success to his *own Skill and Industry*. Or lastly, whether he has not suffered his *Love of Gain* to prevail so far as to make him *cheat*, and *wrong his Neighbour*, by *false Weight* and *scanty Measure*.

Does a Man find that he *labours in vain*, that, notwithstanding all his Care and Industry, he cannot *get forward*, nor thrive as *others* do in the *same Trade* or Business, let him recollect, and it is ten to one, but he finds the *Cause* of it in *himself*. Either his *Heart* is so set upon his worldly Business, that *God is not in all his Thoughts*; he has never desired his Assistance, or begged his Blessing. Or else there may be some *secret Fraud* in his Practice, which, like a *Canker* in the Heart, imperceptibly sucks out all his Substance. Or he has *ground the Face of the Poor*, by obliging him to *work without Pay*, with-holding from the *Labourer his Hire*, or paying him *less* than he deserves. Such Doings are apt to bring a *Curse* upon all that a Man has in
the

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the House, or in the Field, at home or abroad. *Lastly*, is a Man unfortunate in his *Cattle*, are they destroyed by Sickneſs or Lightning, and other unavoidable Means? Let him ſeriously look into himſelf for the *Cauſe*, and 'tis odds but he finds that he has *loved theſe* more than *Chriſt*, and has been worſhiping a *Golden Calf*. Or he has been *unthankful* for the Increate of them, and forgot to give *Glory to God*. Or he has treated them with *Cruelty* and *Barbarity*, by *beating* them *unmercifully*, or *working* them *unreaſonably*; *denying* them ſuch *Food*, *Reſt*, and *Tendance*, as is neceſſary; or *tormenting* them for *Diverſion*; any putting them to exquisite *Pain* for his own *Pleaſure*, forgetting, that, according to the Relation between us, there is a Duty due from *us* to *all Creatures*; and that the *merciful Man*, as the Scripture teaches us, *will be merciful even to the Beasts that periſh*. If the *preſent Fatality* will put any upon ſuch *Self-Examination*; if Men will take Care to cultivate and improve any *ſerious Impreſſions* it has made upon their *Hearts*, and it produces in them the *Fear of God*, a *thankful Mind*, a *reſigned Soul*, an *humble Faith*, and a *ſincere Repentance*, it will be a freſh Argument of *God's Goodneſs* in *this Viſitation*, and will be a certain Means of averting *this* and all other Evils from us; or of taking out their Sting, ſo that they ſhall be no Evils in the End to us.

Now to God the Father, &c.

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